

1st MSOB activation marks evolution of 1st Force Recon Company

By MARSOC Public Affairs

U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command reached a new readiness milestone during the activation ceremony of the 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, Oct. 26.

The 1st MSOB located at Camp Pendleton, Calif. is like its Camp Lejeune, N.C. counterpart, 2d MSOB. It will include several Marine special operations companies that will deploy with Marine Expeditionary Units to provide regional combatant commanders with a sea-based special operations capability for use in the Global War on Terrorism.

Activation of the 1st MSOB was a significant step forward for MARSOC and Marine integration into the Special Operations Forces, but it also marked the end of another chapter in Marine Corps history. 1st Force Reconnaissance Company cased its colors and deactivated during the same ceremony.

“Today is not about commanders,” said Lt. Col. George Smith, Jr., the outgoing commanding officer of 1st Force Recon. “It’s about the many Marines and Sailors who have served in this great company and those who will continue to serve with MARSOC.”

Two platoons from 1st Force Reconnaissance were reassigned to the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion and the Marines from the remaining three platoons formed MARSOC’s newest Special Operations Battalion and the core of its first two Marine Special Operations Companies on the West Coast.

Integration of Recon Marines into MARSOC is a natural evolution for a military unit with a pioneering history in unique warfighting skills such as long-range reconnaissance, surveillance, long-range communications, close quarter battle and advanced insertion skills.

First established at Camp Pendleton, Calif., in 1957, 1st Force Reconnaissance Company’s heritage begins with the famed amphibious reconnaissance units of World War II and the Korean War.

Elements of 1st Force Reconnaissance Company first deployed to the Republic of Vietnam in 1964. During nearly five years in country, the Marines of 1st Force Recon conducted more than 2,200 reconnaissance patrols and participated in numerous operations, including the battle for Hue City.

The 1st Force Reconnaissance Company deployed to the Persian Gulf in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, to Somalia in support of Operation Restore Hope and to East Timor.

More recently, 1st Force Recon deployed numerous times in support of the Global War on Terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many 1st Force Recon Marines and Sailors

returned from combat in Iraq mere days before the unit made the transition to MARSOC.

“I could speak for days about these great men,” Smith said. “They are absolutely fearless.”

Although 1st Force Reconnaissance has been deactivated, the skill, professionalism and esprit de corps shared by Recon Marines will carry on with MARSOC and the 1st MSOB.

The battle-tested Marines of MARSOC’s newest battalion have already formed the first West Coast Marine Special Operations Company and are training to deploy with a MEU in the near future.

“Standing up a new unit isn’t an easy task,” said Maj. Gen. Dennis Hejlik, commander of MARSOC. “We are doing everything possible to get these Marines and Sailors back into the fight.”